



## Maricopa County Animal Care & Control



# *Breaking a Begging Habit*

It's dinnertime, and your dog's eyes may as well be glued to your plate. So why not slip him a snack? It couldn't possibly do any harm, could it? Unfortunately, that one little transaction could be the start of something big. You may wind up with a dog that begs at every meal, and won't give up until you give in.

The problem of begging is not difficult to fix. The hardest part is being consistent. To begin with, you simply must never feed your dog from the table. Slipping up just once a week will only make it harder to break his habit. It's also a good idea to always feed your dog after you have eaten. This will help him understand that humans, not dogs, are leaders of the household pack.

The goal is to train your dog to take food only when permitted. This means during his mealtimes or when you offer him treats. Begin this exercise by asking your dog to sit as you prepare his food in an area away from the dinner table. Next, place his dish on the floor while he sits. Ideally, he should remain sitting until you tell him "Take it" or "Okay." This may take several sessions, so be patient.

Until your dog's retraining is complete, Maricopa County Animal Care & Control recommends several things that you can do to stop him from begging. One solution is to teach him to lie down in his place when you eat. You may wish to have your dog sit on a rug or bed in another part of the room when you are eating. If you prefer that your dog sit at your side, first put him on a leash. While you are seated at the table, you will sit on a portion of the leash, allowing him just enough slack to lie down comfortably. Each time he rises, tell him "No!" You can place him back in proper position if necessary. It's important to praise and reward him while he is behaving.

If your dog remains undaunted and continues to ask for handouts, firmly tell him "No!" and put him in another room. He may bark for awhile after you shut the door, but keep him isolated until you're done with dinner. Do this often enough, and he may eventually begin to equate begging with being sent away. And remember, don't give in!

For more information on animal care, behavior or AC&C programs contact (602) 506-PETS or visit [pets.maricopa.gov](http://pets.maricopa.gov)  
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